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AN ESSAY TOWARD AN INSTITUTIONAL CONCEPTION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Psychological data are responses to stimuli.—Since the facts of psychology are correlated, interacting responses and stimuli, there can be no fixed and permanent human nature. Both the psychological person and the surrounding stimuli grow and change. Such an organismic and institutional psychological conception can handle social phenomena in a scientific manner. *Group Mind.* This is really an institutional stimulus and not a reaction. *Differential mental capacities of races.*—Different groups have different knowledge, actions, and beliefs dependent upon their different stimulating conditions. The prelogical mind of primitive people is a pure fiction. *Capacity of environment to influence culture.*—Environment is usually taken to be physical objects and conditions purely. As such it is practically impotent to influence culture, but from a psychological standpoint environment is frequently if not always cultural stimuli and institutions. *Variety of cultural stimuli.*—Institutions may be reactions which become cultural stimuli for the people of a group. *Character of institutions.*—Functional, created by serving as stimuli and maintained by stimulating actions. Functional character independent of institutions, origin, or kind of reaction called out. *Personality of institutions.*—When cultural or common stimuli are controlled by persons we make them into mental and subjective things.

Nature of social psychology.—To study reactions of people as stimulated by institutions or cultural stimuli. Contrasted with individual psychology which is interested in reactions to particular or uninstitutionalized objects or conditions. Co-operates with economics, sociology, law, politics, etc. *Does social psychology usurp or invade the domain of the social sciences?* Social psychology is interested in "reactions" to institutions. Social sciences are interested in economic, sociological, or political "institutions." *Social psychology historical.*—Institutions are developed by reactions to them, and reactions are developed through stimulation; hence social phenomena are historical. *Difficulty in keeping distinct actions and stimuli.*—In economics for example, more objects are stimuli in addition to actions than in politics; so behavior and institutions can be kept more distinct. *Social psychology essential for understanding group phenomena.*—Because it is an institution social psychology deals always and exclusively with concrete facts; thus is essential in the study of social phenomena, although not basic to other sciences.

II

Fundamental as a guiding principle of psychology is the necessity to observe that the data of this science are the concrete reactions of persons to the various stimuli which surround them. Absolutely imperative is it also to extrude from psychology any notion of the person as a fixed system of instincts or other sorts of teleo-physiological entities. Upon the basis of teleological impulses

psychology can itself be nothing in the domain of science, nor be of any significance in any humanistic investigation. No less helpful than valid on the other hand, is the conception that from the standpoint of the human sciences man is a sum or series of reaction systems of which all but a few simple ones¹ were developed on the basis of the interaction of a prior series of reaction systems with a previous stimulating situation. Thus both persons and their stimulating surroundings are conceived of as developing in mutual interdependence, as indeed the facts which we observe must perforce lead us to suspect. Because the person is a living organism, a complex psychological machine performing various operations, he will bring about many modifications in his surroundings, whether they are physical or social objects or processes, and whether met with in one's own or in another group. On the other hand, because the reaction systems are definite acts, whether manual operations, ceremonial procedure, thinking, or believing, they will at the same time be modified by contact with the surrounding objects.

Now, according to such a conception, not only is there no permanent human nature in the form of a mass of impulses, but the superindividual or group mind is completely dissipated. Better still, we gain through such a conception a clear insight into the mode of development and significance of the conception of the collective mind, namely, the reactions of individuals to institutions as stimuli. The basis for a belief in a group mind or a collective consciousness arises from the observation that some reactions of the person are directed toward group objects or institutions. It is clear of course that any object may be a group stimulus when it is in a group setting. Thus a stone in one's path may be kicked while one is alone, but merely stepped over when other persons are present.

Never must we lose sight of the fact that in a scientific, psychological investigation the only things which have existence or significance are the concrete reactions of a human being or a group of human individuals. Therefore we can observe that the group mind and all the intellectual crimes committed in its name are

¹ We have already intimated that it is such simple reactions as organic reflexes that are expanded into the teleological impulses.

due to the misuse of a metaphor which made of a particular kind of reaction a substantial mind. The group mind, if it has any significance or existence at all is certainly no mind in the ordinary sense of that term. Nor is it a mind in the sense of a reaction to a stimulus, but rather it is itself a stimulus to certain reactions. The Oxford or Harvard mind, the workingman's mind, etc., are traditions or institutions developed in particular surroundings and in particular situations, which call out particular reactions on the part of the individuals who are found in those situations. Of course as stimulations to particular forms of conduct these institutions are certainly existent, and frequently, no doubt, are also significant. The state as an ethical idea is therefore nothing more than a complex set of traditions of various sorts which are centered about peoples, a particular country, groups of buildings, or other tangible objects.

The development of the various conceptions of social consciousness and of group minds may be looked upon as being to a considerable extent a reaction to the conceptions of individual consciousness, or as attempts to rectify and amplify those conceptions which obviously are absolutely unsuited to the purposes of students of social phenomena. Such students are brought face to face with ceremonials, rituals, beliefs, and thoughts which obviously antedate any specific person's reactions and which can only be interpreted as having a group meaning. The need is at once felt for a more objective and permanent basis for the group of phenomena studied. From a cultural standpoint the idea of a superconsciousness at the same time is a reflection of the continental idealistic opposition to the British individualist theory of ethics and politics. It is, then, the undeniably distinct difference between the different domains of human phenomena, namely, the individual, and common or group reactions, which makes it possible for sociologists and other writers to hypostatize the facts of group reactions into a mind or superconsciousness. Thus a faulty method of analogy injects a distressing confusion into the domains of both psychology and the sciences for which it is supposed to be a basis.

How to avoid the factitious discussions concerning the super-individual or collective mind and the interaction of an individual

mind with this collective mentality seems explicit to the writer when we think in terms of concrete reactions of persons and not of entities. We avoid the superindividual mind by observing that the individual mind means only a system of definite response systems. As a factual object the superindividual mind, when not considered as a social stimulus or institution, must consequently be reduced to a series of reaction systems, common to various individuals; that is to say, a group of individual minds. By cleaving tenaciously to the concrete facts of human reaction we can never lose ourselves in the idealistic mists that seem to overshadow discussions of sociological and political facts.

Once more, an adequate psychological conception indicates the way toward the interpretation of knowledge and the development of intellect among the peoples in the various levels of culture. From the standpoint of psychology as the science of definite organismic reactions we expect of the peoples of the different cultural levels only such reactions as they have had an opportunity to build up in the specific surroundings in which they find themselves. Hocart¹ has well shown the pitfalls of a psychology based not upon the concrete interactions of persons and their surroundings but upon a logical analysis of the capacities of the civilized mind. From the standpoint of a logical analysis of what a mind does, the so-called primitive people lack an analytic faculty, as indicated by their use of language. But as Hocart shows, the particular use of language by primitive people as well as other people, is due to the practical exigencies of their daily lives. Hence it appears that if psychology as interpretation of reactions is to be at all serviceable it must be based upon actual human adjustments. Furthermore, the conception of psychology as the study of actual human behavior dictates the rejection of the belief of the market place that the human mind is a permanent essence which is perfected in the individual of European culture whose mind must be considered as the standard by which to judge the minds of primitive man. According to an organismic² psychology it is utter

¹ *British Jour. of Psychol.*, V, 267.

² The term organismic refers to the psychological conception according to which the reactions of the person to specific stimuli supply the data, and not a mind or physiological activities.

nonsense to think of the minds, morals, and institutions of men in different cultures as representing stages in the development toward our own unique and exalted conditions of life and thought. An organismic view also forbids the psychological, poetic fallacy of reading into the actions of primitive peoples the behavior of European persons.

That the differences in the mental capacities of the various human races are due entirely to the development of different reaction systems by the members of these races, is clearly revealed by an organismic psychological conception. The problem of race difference is then a definite empirical question involving the facts of contact between people and specific types of surrounding stimuli. The answer to the question as to why different races respond differently to what we may be pleased to call the same objects, is because through their specific previous developments each group has acquired different meaning reactions toward those objects. Furthermore, the question as to the possibility of intellectual progress is neatly answered, since the limits to developing newer and more appropriate reaction systems depends to a most considerable degree upon the stimulating conditions surrounding the persons of the group. In addition to the surroundings as a determiner of a group's progress in developing reaction systems, such advancement is also dependent upon the previous developments of the groups in the same direction.

At this point we are also able to judge the merits of the conception of *collective representation* as developed by the French sociologists and especially by Lévy-Bruhl.¹ According to this conception the individual of primitive culture approaches objects with a mind characteristically different from that of individuals of higher culture. This difference consists in the perception by the primitive man of certain mystical qualities in objects along with the other qualities which the individuals of higher culture experience. This theory of prelogical mentality, it must be said, is based upon reports of definite observations of the manner in which primitive men do respond to the objects with which they are in contact. Among such observations are the universality and consistency of the

¹ Cf. *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*.

particular means of reaction which leads Lévy-Bruhl to suppose that the primitive man is unable as is the civilized individual, to abstract the perceptual qualities from the conceptual additions to the objects. This apparent inability of separating the actually perceived and the mentally endowed is an evidence of the reality and power of group consciousness.

Without attempting to add to the able criticisms¹ of the obviously faulty conception of the unique differences between the primitive mind and the so-called civilized intellects we can see in the specific ways in which not only different groups react but also different individuals in the same group, merely the fact of having acquired different equipments of reaction systems. If we keep carefully before us the fact that what we mean by mind in any case is a specific and characteristic system of reactions to stimulating objects, then it is obvious that different persons and different groups will have different minds, and will react differently to things. And since the kinds of reactions one has depends upon one's contacts with objects we can readily see that the collectivity of consciousness is a direct result of a common and co-ordinate set of stimuli. The difference between the primitive and the higher cultural minds is due entirely to the different conditions of each. In the primitive situation the surroundings are constant and similar, while in the more cultural situations there are greater changes and variety in the surroundings and greater diffusion of stimuli. Needless it is to remark that the surroundings of the primitive man are institutionalized and crystallized; so the primitive man truly differs from the so-called civilized person by the number and types of reaction systems which he possesses. No basis whatever can we find in the actual activities of individuals to support the belief in the native difference of the primitive and cultural minds, but much is there to indicate the institutionalization of stimuli. The differences in the total situations of the primitive and civilized man can be summed up in the statement that the more constant and more standard surroundings of the former have made it impossible

¹ Cf. Goldenweiser, *Psychol. Bull.*, VII, 358; *Amer. Anthropologist*, XIII, 121; Webb, *Group Theories of Religion and the Individual*, 1916; and Myers, "On the Permanence of Racial Mental Differences," in *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems*, 1911.

for him to develop as many meanings of objects as has the person in the higher or more complex culture. And as we might expect, in the case of the primitive man, surrounding objects may and sometimes do acquire, in consequence, standard and mystical meanings in the sense that the person will perform particular reactions toward them, reactions which in many cases have mystical and other special significance.

Our institutional hypothesis likewise illuminates the problem of the potency of environment to influence cultural changes. From the standpoint of institutional, social psychology the environment can never be considered as fixed physical or geographical loci in which a cultural group with its traditions is found. Such mere physical and geographic conditions do exist of course, but not from the standpoint of the humanistic sciences. That is to say, the physicist or geographer may abstract these things from all their human associations. When we consider the environment as stimuli to persons who have already built up various reaction systems, we will always find that the objects around the persons have meaning and significance. Snow may or may not be thought of by particular people as solidified water, but it is definitely building material or not, depending upon the reaction systems the persons of the group have built in their previous contacts with snow. It is only in this sense that a cultural phenomenon is determined by the "unique course of its past history."¹ Also, it may be noted that more efficient than physical things as determiners of cultural changes are the stimuli which persons and their institutions offer to other persons and other groups. For this reason the contacts of people serve greatly to accelerate changes in their respective cultures.

And now we may fairly ask what constitutes the social situation and the cultural environment which influence and even dominate the individual born into them. Such a social situation is and can only be interpreted as a group of reactions of people to certain stimuli, and the products of such reactions to various things, which have become traditions and institutions. It is only upon such a basis that we can understand the interaction of persons

¹ Cf. Lowie, *Culture and Ethnology*, p. 96.

and their cultural surroundings. Moreover, upon such a basis we can attain a definite understanding of the nature and functioning of institutions in their various ramifications in group life. Among such institutions are railroads or other corporations, religions, political parties, famous eating places, or clubs, etc., besides customs, traditions, etc. What we have in each of these cases are stimuli in the shape of firms, corporations, deities, and places toward which people¹ react in certain ways. They frequent these places, feel and act reverently toward these stimuli, send money to them, sacrifice to them, speak of them, and otherwise individualize, perpetuate, and glorify them. It is in this sense that we can agree with Durkheim² that "sacred beings, though superior to men can live only in human consciousness," although we part company with him when he asserts that "the things which the worshiper really gives his gods are not the foods which he places upon the altars, not the blood which he lets flow from his veins; it is his thought." For, from our organismic standpoint all of these reactions to the god-institution are of equal power in keeping the god alive and bringing the growing individuals in the group to know and worship him, besides possibly carry him over as a new institution to another group. The cautious observer, of course, does not confuse such institutional objects as we have mentioned with mystic objective or universal consciousness.

Behavior institutions, then, may be looked upon from two angles, each representing a different phase of development. On the one hand, we may consider a behavior institution as a reaction or system of reactions of various individuals or groups to particular types of stimuli while, on the other, we must look upon it as a stimulus to reaction. Now these reactions may be knowingly planned to bring about some particular result for some reason or other, or they may be blindly performed in accordance with some handed-down tradition. At any rate, these reactions or their products become stabilized and selected for some social or individual reason through some voluntary act, or political, commercial, or indus-

¹ It is immaterial, of course, how many people. There is a difference between the existence of an institution and the numerical strength of those who acknowledge it.

² *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 346 ff.

trial circumstance, and finally become a source of prolonged stimuli to individuals or groups. By becoming thus stabilized and selected these reactions or their products become institutionalized. While becoming institutionalized such reactions or reactional products, whether firms, any sort of voluntary associations, industries, or other tangible or intangible group objects may be named institutions in development.

When such reactions are fully formed, that is to say, when they are actually functioning as stimuli to various reactions, they are full-fledged institutions and comprise elements of the cultural environment of individuals and groups. Clear it is that such institutions are not fixed entities, for they constantly vary their character with a greater or lesser celerity. It is a common observation that among peoples of the lower cultures objects and actions are more readily and more definitely institutionalized. Among men of the higher cultures, institutions change more rapidly, a fact which parallels the presence of an indefinitely larger number of institutions.¹

Most emphatically do we want to insist upon the functional character of institutions, for only by considering surrounding objects in their functional capacities as stimuli to reactions can our psychology be of any value in the investigations of human problems. This follows from the point that we have already made, namely, that unless we keep clear our stimuli and our responses we cannot adequately describe human behavior. To the neglect of distinguishing between stimuli and responses, may be directly traced the frequent universalization of human reactions and the mentalization of stimuli which render entirely nugatory so much of psychological description.

That the operation of objects, events, or conditions as stimuli to common human reactions makes them into institutions is obvious from the inspection of the actual facts of human behavior. How else than by attracting worshipers does a church arise, or by the approval of persons does a government come into existence, and is not the life of a trade union a creation by the act of association

¹ In other words, this statement is true only on the whole, since many institutions among peoples of higher culture change very slowly. It all depends upon the factual, albeit unknown and unpredicted, consequences of the change.

on the part of its adherents? Let it be at once noted that this creation of an institution by virtue of the fact that an object or an event becomes a stimulus to a set of common[†] reactions, is not limited to any sort of environmental feature. In fact the range of institutions or common stimuli may include physical objects, such as countries, buildings of every sort, people, etc. The point is that any object, be it physical, chemical, astronomical, biological, or social can serve as an institution.

And from our standpoint it does not matter just what the origin of an institution may be. As a matter of fact, most of our institutional or common stimuli we do not know the origin of, nor have we the slightest notion as to how they were fostered and diffused. This fact is especially clear when we consider that institutions include stimuli to such varying reactions as comprise our intellectual, religious, social, aesthetic, and other classes of responses. When we do have the opportunity, however, to observe the birth and growth of an institution we observe just how an object can become a stimulus to common reactions and how the institution growing out of the original stimulus-object can take on an entirely different function. Illustrative of such a situation is the firm created to partake in the meanest variety of petty commerce, which through the unforeseen conspiracy of human conditions blossoms into a distinguished and dignified "house," sometimes growing far away from any contact with its original founder, who may be left far behind in the hopeless mire of financial penury. From the wealth of word-institutions which start as phases of individual assertions and gradually take on a general character, one may learn the whole story of social behavior. It is needless to comment upon the rôle played by intellectual inventions in the manipulations of human affairs; let it suffice to mention merely a few universally appreciated word-institutions—democracy, supply and demand, national honor, and thrift. How efficacious such institutions are in the affairs of men and how easily they are created we learn from our recent lessons in propagandism.

Entirely immaterial it is what sorts of behavior an institution calls forth; its place is secure in the human economy as long as it stimulates men to action. While the holder of any academic

[†] Not necessarily identical.

degree may jeer at the title as an institution, condemn the necessity for it, scoff at the manner in which it is obtained, he is nevertheless thereby perpetuating it as a stimulus of human action precisely as much as when the prospective candidate thinks with pleasure of sometimes attaining it, or strives for its obtainment, or when the members of a group grant homage and social or economic preferment to the holder of the degree. Here we see why institutions may be kept alive just as effectively through song and tale as by embodiment in a group of buildings, a country with its people, or a periodic issue of printed pages.

From the observation of the manipulation of embodied institutions by persons, can we gain some insight into the motives for mentalizing institutions. Because such institutions, whether churches, banks, universities, governments, or railroads, are in control of individuals we observe them to commit injuries, to recognize merit, and otherwise serve as personal stimuli to other persons. So much in control of individuals and cliques of individuals may even so tremendous an institution as an imperial government be, that one may easily imagine that the peace and tranquillity of the world may depend upon four or five men, or that great men control the destinies of the rest of mankind. And so we may, if we are not too critical in our attitudes, react toward the institutions about us as though they were persons with good or evil intentions toward us, and as though they were bent upon our encouragement and help or our injury and destruction. It is not surprising then that after fortifying ourselves with an idealistic metaphysics we transform such institutions into minds or ideas.

As a final illustration of the advantages accruing from the employment of a genuinely descriptive psychological attitude in the study of social phenomena, we might take the case of religion. In this domain there have been debates innumerable with respect to a proper interpretation of the religious attitude. The wide prevalence of a deep-seated awe among men in the presence of events and objects revealing the profound mysteries of human life and action, has led to a long-enduring prejudice in favor of a religious instinct. All men are endowed, it is held, by a property of their nature which manifests itself in characteristic religious

conduct. On the other hand, it is obvious that if religious conduct were the result of such an innate force it would have to be vastly simpler than the prevailing highly cultured and intellectual attitudes constituting the religious life. Necessary it seems then to most writers to develop a conception of a superindividual or group consciousness which should be the source and origin of universal, exalted ideas and actions. To account for the great varieties and numerous types of religions such a theorist glibly asserts the existence of numerous developments of such universal minds. As we have several times indicated, such theorists are merely inflating the individual soul and expanding it, with the faith that they can thereby take care of all the facts.

Only a casual acquaintance with religious phenomena is required to see that many fallacies are hidden in all the theories implying the universality of religion, because of individual instincts or group consciousness. And first, we must consider the great differences between the various activities which are placed under the single rubric of religion. Not only is there nothing in common between religion in so-called civilized communities and that among the infra-civilized groups; so that the one cannot be a development of the other, but also within the civilized communities religion means vastly different things. In fact there is no such thing as religion any more than there is such a thing as morality or science. These terms are employed to sum up and crystallize a tremendous host of specific complex phenomena although it is evident that each specific event or fact must be accounted for by definite correlated conditions and stimulations. This means not at all that we fail to consider adequately the wide range of the specific events which go under the heading of religion. Sufficiently accounted for are the facts of religion by the actual mysteries and profundities of life which reach down to the grossest and simplest individual of any culture by means of the traditions and institutions of the various communities. And because these awesome facts are differently known and differently appreciated, the reactions to them by different people cannot be stages toward the development of some standard form of reaction. Obviously the enterprise of investigating the activities, beliefs, and thoughts of

people cannot be adequately served but by a definite study of interacting individuals and institutions.

At the basis of the attempts to explain with a single conception such complex and varied facts as religious phenomena, lies the idea, whether known or unknown to the theorist, that all the complex facts of a social sort are to be explained, as are the simple facts of the physical domain, by a single law. Thus arise the laws of communal development and organization, and of communal activities. In point of fact, however, no event or object of the world around us can be explained by reference to a single governing law or principle. Every event is a unique fact and its explanation, if it is to be significant, can only be accomplished by a correlation of the fact under discussion with other antedating, simultaneously occurring, or post-dating facts. Obviously the same conditions prevail in the physical domain, but there the conditions are all simpler, or are made so, for investigative purposes. The attempt to simplify the social facts for explanatory purposes is based, therefore, upon mistaken principles of scientific activity.

III

Thus we are brought to a consideration of the nature and function of social or collective psychology. And first we must notice that collective psychology does not and cannot occupy itself with anything but the reactions of human individuals.¹ For, as we have so frequently reiterated, all the data of psychology are concrete reactions to stimuli. Now the difference between social or collective and individual psychology is precisely this, that the former is occupied with reactions to collective stimuli or institutions, while the latter studies the reactions of persons to non-institutional objects and things.

For us, then, it is incorrect to draw up a hard and fast distinction between social and individual psychology. In each domain are found different kinds of responses of the same individuals. Of course the specific acts, as studied, by the psychologists interested

¹ An individualistic psychology is quite common, especially among American psychologists, but this individualism reduces itself to the denial of a group consciousness by supporting the contention that social reactions are after all individual neuromuscular processes.

in particular domains, will be unique and will greatly differ from the others, but the difference is not one of principle but one comparable to the differences in the description of electrical lighting when using different lamps and fixtures. When we distinguish between reactions which occur under individual and group auspices, we do not intend at all to countenance the view that social psychology is the exclusive domain of mobs and other peculiar collections of individuals.

Because in psychology we are not dealing with "minds" of any description, obviously, the problem of social psychology is not that of tracing the origin of consciousness or self-consciousness. The self is neither the presupposition nor the product of social phenomena. Such problems, it has been pointed out,¹ are representative of the metaphysical problem of the universal and particular disguised in psychological dress. When we consider reaction systems as the mind, they neither presuppose nor are the products of a social situation; they cannot be thought of as absolutely beginning nor as having always existed. The view that the mind is developed in a social process can only be derived from the premises that the mind is something superimposed upon the person. Indeed to those who hold the view mentioned, the person is considered as a physiological being with instincts as the basic reactions, and whose mind is created by the transformation of the instincts, sensations, and appetites constituting man's native endowment.²

Since psychology is then the science of definite concrete reactions, the study of group phenomena can only be accomplished by the actual investigation of how people act under the various conditions of stimulation by group objects or institutions. Consequently such information can only be obtained from studies in economics, sociology, and other community sciences. The data of psychology then presupposes investigative methods and interpretations of data in the specific fields mentioned. When such data have been obtained they can be employed in further investigations

¹ By Haeberlin, *Psychol. Rev.*, XXIII, 279 ff.

² Cf. Tarde, *Laws of Imitation*; Mead, "Social Psychology as Counterpart to Physiological Psychology," *Psychol. Bull.*, VI, 401; and Dewey, "The Need for Social Psychology," *Psychol. Rev.*, XXIV, 267.

and interpretations in other related fields. When we discover what reactions a worker makes to a strike situation and what attitudes he builds up, we have gained such an insight into this situation as may be employed in the future control of them, or we may be content with merely understanding the situation. To be sure, this specific situation is not to be understood without knowing something of the reactions of the person in previous situations. Of the utmost importance it is to notice, however, that any information that we may obtain concerning the person has been derived from the observation of him in some stimulus-response situation. The point is that no fact in social psychology can be obtained excepting from that situation itself.

In consequence, no one will expect to interpret specific types of reactions to specific situations without an analysis of those situations. To expect psychology to offer such interpretation without an investigation of the specific reaction conditions means to look upon psychology as an artificial set of arbitrary general principles. How can one explain the reactions of the members of the aboriginal Australian tribes to the exogamous moieties unless we investigate the precise stimulating conditions that gave rise to those reactions? The psychologist can know nothing, unless he knows how long a group stimulus in the form of an institution has been operating, how strict are the observances of its dictates, how long and how efficient have been the instructions with regard thereto, how compelling are its mandates, both as to the law of the group and as a necessity of the circumstances responsible for the law, and how easy it is to disobey them. All this and more must be observed by the psychologist before he can be competent to pass judgment upon any social phenomenon.

But here arises the problem of usurpation. May not the ethnologist or economist say, that if such be the task and the province of psychology it leaves no place and task for the social sciences. Such is far from being the truth, however. Let us keep in mind that while psychology is interested foremost and always in the responses of people, those responses do not exhaust the facts of the situation. For no reaction can occur in a particular manner unless definite stimulations exist to condition the appearance of

the act. Thus the institutions surrounding persons and to which they respond supply us with an endless series of essential social psychological facts. The scientific study of human phenomena consists, therefore, in the united effort of the psychologist and the social scientist. Together they study, in their intimate and constant interactions, responses, and the cultural, economic, social, or ethical situations in which these responses occur. No difficulty attaches to such a co-operation since it is impossible to confuse the two phases of any psychological action, or to overlook the differences between them.

And so the division between psychology and anthropology, for example, is marked by the line separating the reactions of the individuals, whether they are in groups or not, and the institutional objects, events or conditions, constituting the stimuli-occasions for those reactions. To consider briefly another view of the relationship of the two sciences, we find the anthropologist¹ asserting that, while the psychologist studies the mind of the individual man, anthropology studies the group. Now, we would ask, what is this group that one can study apart from the reactions of the individuals who compose it? And if the anthropologist should confront us with the fact that such activities as group ceremonials consist of entirely different reactions from the private responses of the individuals, we must reply that the difference lies not in the reactions of the persons, but rather in the character of the stimuli. It is admitted, of course, that the anthropologist, in common with other students of human phenomena, may be primarily interested in common or group stimuli. When the anthropologist informs us that he is "vitally interested in what the group requires of the individual and by what steps the group comes to exact those requirements," he means, does he not, that the anthropologist is interested in the occasions for action, namely, institutions, while the psychologist is interested in the reactions of the stimulating institutions. Obviously the group data which the anthropologist records consist of the observations of the activities of specific persons, although when we speak in a general way the distinction between the individual and the group is entirely valid. When the

¹ Wissler, *Amer. Anthropol.*, XXIII, 1 ff.

anthropologist¹ divides psychology from anthropology by declaring that the anthropologist, unlike the psychologists, is merely interested in why the group demands of individuals that they learn to write and not in the precise processes by which the art of writing is acquired, he is again referring to the reactions of individuals to different kinds of stimuli. In the study of group reactions in the above example he is interested in the development of an institution, while in the individual reaction he observes the adaptation of the person or the group of persons to an institution already established. But in each case we can identify different concrete stimuli and responses.

Obviously no collective phenomenon can be well understood without a thorough study of its two phases. If we are interested in a moral act or problem we must know not only the resultant fact, but also what the temptation was, besides the character of the man. The latter also is a result of previous reactions of the person to previously occurring conditions. Of primary importance too is the fact that what one calls temptation for one person is not a determiner of action at all for another. And this fact we learn from long observation of actions of various individuals to different environing circumstances. Here again is brought out the fact that social psychology is not a science of generalized principles² but rather a study of concrete reactions to definite stimulating circumstances. And here too we see the justification of the anthropologists who deny that mere geography is the determiner of cultural facts. Prominent as a factor in the determination of cultural facts are the forms of behavior which the persons of any given culture have built up in their previous contacts with their surroundings. If a cultural fact is describable as a complex reaction to an institutional stimulus, then consequently the development of either the reaction or the stimulating circumstances cannot be excluded from the descriptions.

Because the type of reactions which an individual performs is the result of previous contacts with objects in their particular circumstances, an institutional psychology is historical, and there-

¹ Wissler, *Amer. Anthropol.*, XXIII, 1 ff.

² Such as imitation, or consciousness of kind, etc.

fore we cannot oppose the psychological to the historical method. In other words, when we make a psychological study of some collective phenomenon we are considering it as a vital development of human facts. On the other hand, we see that the stimulus phase of the present phenomenon, namely, an institution or institutional object is also a development of a previous contact of an individual or individuals with objects. That is to say, both the psychological (reaction) and the institutional (stimulus) series of facts are derived from a concrete development of a preceding line of similar facts. Since objects as cultural stimuli possess cultural characteristics in the sense that we have just indicated, we readily see why different reactions are made by different groups to what are, from a physical standpoint, precisely the same objects. This condition prevails of course in all the domains of human phenomena.

When we turn to the field of economics the principle of the co-operative working of psychology and the other sciences comes clearly to light. Consider economic facts of whatever sort, and we find that they are products of some human reactions and stimulating conditions. Certainly the desires, thoughts, and other acts of persons are components of the strike situation, but just as certainly there are also the facts of competing firms, the natural or artificial conditions of supply and demand, the problems of raw material sources, the means of transportation, and a host of other factors. Here we see the stimulus and response phases of the situation standing out. Remembering always the concrete nature of any reaction, we see in a strike situation besides the actions of the persons, the uncertainties of employment, the fact that the job is owned by some one else, the feeling of detachedness from the world of industry and life in general, and the knowledge that the worker has forced upon him of being doomed forever with his entire line of family succession to be a vassal of other men or of a vast uncontrollable industrial system. These, too, are among the social facts which most certainly condition economic phenomena.

To the question as to why it is that in studying the facts of the economic domain we can trace more clearly the phases of the stimulus-response situation than is true in the case of politics, for example, the answer is that, in the latter case we are studying

mainly a process, while in the case of economics we have to deal with material also. The total advantage in the economic situation is that the stimulating circumstances stand out more sharply and are especially noticeable since the stimuli in the political domain are themselves reactions of other persons.¹ The raw materials of production with the physical conditions surrounding them, the technological apparatus and processes developed in the courses of their transformation, stand out in relief as the occasions for building up newer reaction systems and for bringing them into operation. Veblen² has given us a vivid picture of how the workers under the régime of the machine industry are induced to build up specific kinds of reaction systems; so that, on the whole, "there results a standardization of the workman's intellectual life, in terms of mechanical process." The same writer implies that socialism, as a system of responses to the economic and political order, is the result of adaptation to the technological requisites of the machine industry. Much as this picture may be overdrawn, with a bias toward particular colors, and with a gross neglect of numerous essential lights and shadows, still we cannot resist the suggestion it affords of the facts in the case.

In all psychological investigation, therefore, must we distinguish carefully the stimulating conditions from the reactions to them, and this for the purpose of observing how intimately related the two phases are. So interrelated are the two aspects of psychological reactions that all too frequently the stimulus side is forgotten. For instance, to say that language is a psychological affair means to forget that word or sound changes, the distribution of given speech forms, the type of grammar and other features may be entirely stimulation factors, explicable on the basis of diffusion and interpenetration of groups.

Such a psychological conception as we have outlined, based as it is upon the concrete specific reactions of persons and their surroundings, the writer submits, therefore, is not only useful, but essential for the interpretation of human events. It is only this

¹ It is in this fact that we find the basis for the recent emphasis by political writers upon the study of human nature and the turning away from the study of institutions.

² *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, 1904.

kind of psychology that can have any value in the investigation of social or cultural facts. We have several times intimated that such a social psychology opposes in principle the suggestion of its being basic to any social science, and further it presupposes the collection of facts and the interpretations of reactions only by a co-operative study with the social sciences. Thus, we have a division of the psychological domain into two branches. That which we have been considering is the social or collective branch, and differs from the branch which studies the simpler individual reactions, in that the latter co-operates with the physiological and physical sciences. The principle of division between the social and physiological branches of psychology, let us again repeat, is not a difference based upon observations varying in kind. On the contrary, all human psychological phenomena are the reactions of persons to definite stimuli; all the differences, therefore, between the different branches of psychology pertain to the differences in stimulating conditions.

As long as we keep in mind the fact that psychology is the science of reactions to stimuli we see that the co-operation with other sciences is absolutely essential. And it also follows from this that there are left no absolutes either in psychology or in the co-operating sciences. Absolutism in psychology is illustrated by the fact that when man was no longer considered a rational being, writers substituted another type of essence, and declared that man was an irrational being. We learn from organismic psychology that man must not be looked upon either as a rational or an irrational being. In fact, psychology cannot deal with such an entity as man at all, but rather must consider specific individuals under specific circumstances. While such an investigation must be very difficult it will nevertheless yield results whose value will be more than commensurate with the effort and caution exercised in the study.

IV

Let us now summarize briefly our conclusions. We are forcibly impressed with the diverse opinions found in the various literatures of the social sciences concerning their relation to psychology. One group of students of human phenomena most firmly believes

that psychology is absolutely basic to the human sciences, while the other holds psychology in contempt as an effective aid in the solution of humanistic problems. These latter students, who are primarily cultural anthropologists, assert that the human sciences are historical and not psychological. In our study we have attempted to discover what are the apparent erroneous conceptions concerning psychology upon which this opposition is based. Paramount among such mistaken conceptions we find established the view that the central phase of human reactions is a permanent human nature. As a consequence of such a belief in a fixed human nature, the first group of social scientists attempts to find the precise elements of this nature which are responsible for the specific, practically uniform activities which it studies. The second group, on the other hand, being more interested in comparative studies of human behavior, claims that psychology, occupied as it is with the fixed elements of human nature, cannot, therefore, throw any light upon the indefinite and changing cultural phenomena.

Our study has indicated that both sides of this opposition have achieved results the inutility of which is exactly commensurate with the errors in their premises. For psychology is clearly not an absolute science of instincts or mentalities of any sort constituting a permanent human nature. Rather, psychology is an organismic and institutional discipline studying the complex unitary responses of organisms to stimulating conditions.

Obviously such organismic behavior not only is different in infrahuman organisms as compared with human individuals, but also distinctly human reactions vary under different stimulating circumstances. Variations in human behavior are especially determined by the fact that much of such behavior consists of responses to institutions or institutional objects. While institutions are of course natural objects they differ from the simpler objects such as merely physical things, not only in their actual constitution but in their function as stimuli to action as well. Institutional objects are characterized by the fact that they are, even in the individual's first contact with them, fraught with definite human meanings. These meanings attach to and persist in the

institutional objects by virtue of the fact that persons in previous contact with the objects in question crystallized such meanings by reacting to these objects in characteristic fashion. Thus snow may or may not be material from which houses are built, or blue may not be the color utilized for men's dress shirts, or colored persons may or may not be people with whom white folks go to school or work beside, and such variations, it is clear, depend upon the common reactions of persons. As to the size of a group to which a certain object or institution will appear as a stimulus, that must naturally depend upon the number of individuals who are in direct contact with the institution, for it must be remembered that only such contacts and their results constitute the material and the subject-matter of the psychological sciences.

From all this it follows that psychology must be an essential, albeit only a co-ordinate, science with ethnology or ethics or sociology. Upon such a basis the various human sciences are pursued as definite factual disciplines in which the laws and principles developed are derived more or less directly from the precise ways in which human beings react to their surroundings. In every intensive investigation of human phenomena the psychological and humanistic sciences, whether the latter be politics or philology, must co-operate with each other. The psychologist occupies himself with the reaction phases of the situation, while the social scientist brings to light and studies the stimulating institutions.